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A

SERMON

PREACHED AT

RICHMOND in SURRY

On JULY 29th 1784,

THE DAY APPOINTED FOR A

GENERAL THANKSGIVING

ON ACCOUNT OF THE PEACE.

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LONDON:

Printed for J. JOHNSON, N°72, St. Paul's Church-Yard.

MDCCLXXXIV.

[*PRICE SIX-PENCE.*]

THE following Diſcourſe is publiſhed at the Requeſt of ſome of the Author's Friends.

ISAIAH xi. 9.

They ſhall not hurt nor deſtroy in all my holy Mountain: for the Earth ſhall be full of the Knowledge of the Lord, as the Waters cover the Sea.

THIS celebrated *Teacher in Iſrael* repreſents through the former Part of this Chapter, in the emblematical Language of *Jewiſh* Prophecy, that Innocence and Harmony, that Tranquillity and Benevolence, which would pervade the Manners of God's People, during the Reign of their King MESSIAH. Every Species of Tyranny and Violence, every Degree of Animoſity and Reſentment, of Rapine and Oppreſſion, would be then unknown throughout the Earth; ſupplanted and ſucceeded by Diſpoſitions of Equity and Gentleneſs, by Acts of Righteouſneſs and Humanity. This hap-

py Change of Things is delineated by the Prophet under the moſt beautiful and lively Images: *The Wolf ſhall dwell with the Lamb, and the Leopard lie down with the Kid; and the Calf, and the young Lion, and the Fatling together; and a little Child ſhall lead them.* He concludes this pleaſing Repreſentation with the Words of the Text: *They ſhall not hurt nor deſtroy in all my holy Mountain: for the Earth ſhall be full of the Knowledge of the Lord, as the Waters cover the Sea.*

At the Contemplation of this glorious Scene, ſhadowed out in ſuch ſtriking Characters; which of you would not rejoice to have been reſerved by indulgent Providence for thoſe Days of Peace and Comfort? Who, that has been Witneſs to the Calamities of War—who, that has but heard of thoſe Devaſtations through the Extremities of the Globe, thoſe horrible Achievements of Bloodſhed and Deſtruction, that have unhappily diſtinguiſhed theſe Times and this Country—

is not ready to exclaim with the Earneſtneſs of the Pſalmiſt, *Woe! is me, that I ſojourn in Meſech; that I dwell in the Tents of Kedar?*—Alas! our Wiſhes are accompliſhed: we live in that bliſsful Period, prefigured by the Prophet: *the Sun of Righteouſneſs is riſen* upon us *with Healing in his Wings.* Whence then, ye will be ready to aſk with Sorrow and Amazement, whence then this different Face of Things? Whence that Strife, that Injuſtice, thoſe Vices and Diſorders, too numerous to recount, which infeſt Society and mar the Comforts of private Life? Whence thoſe Riſings of *Nation againſt Nation and Kingdom againſt Kingdom,* that deſolate the Earth with Torrents of human Blood? Are not theſe Events an unanſwerable Impeachment of the Veracity of Prophecy and the Power of God? By no Means. We are in Poſſeſſion of a Religion, both able and calculated to produce theſe great Alterations, ſpecified by the Prophet. The Nature

and Tendencies of Things, undepraved by the Interpoſition of human Perverſity and the Mixture of human Vices, are abſtractedly conſidered in the Scriptures and in the Eye of the Almighty. Our Religion is a Scheme of Love and Concord, a Charter of *Peace and Mercy from God our Father, and our Lord Jeſus Chriſt.* But where is the Plea for Accuſation, and the Ground of Wonder, if we refuſe it's Counſels and diſobey it's Laws? The *Sower* has performed his Office with Fidelity, and the *Seed* is good; but the Ground unfit for it's Reception. We engage in the Profeſſion of Chriſtianity, but diſregard the Practice. We talk of God and Jeſus, of Holineſs and Virtue, *with our Lips*; but *our Heart is far* from them. We neither know the genuine Spirit of our Religion, nor perform what we do know. It is indeed this Ignorance of Chriſtianity, this Inattention to it's true Character, this *Form of Godlineſs* without *the Power*, that is the

Source

Source of thoſe Sins and Miſeries, which continue to ſpread in Oppoſition to the Goſpel. And this is clearly intimated by the Prophet: *They ſhall not hurt*, ſays he, *nor deſtroy in all my holy Mountain.* And why? *Becauſe the Earth ſhall be filled with the Knowledge of the Lord, as the Waters cover the Sea.* We muſt accuſe ourſelves then for the little Influence of Revelation in correcting the Diſorders of Society. There is no Medicine in the Stores of Iſrael, no *Balm in Gilead*, able to rectify that Depravity of Conſtitution, which converts the moſt wholeſome Food into Bitterneſs and Corruption.

To ſurvey that wide Field of Events, exhibited ſince the Publication of the Religion of Chriſt, in Contradiction to the Nature and Dictates of it; were too extenſive a Compaſs for our Contemplation on this Occaſion. It will contribute more to our Improvement, if we take a ſhort Retroſpect of thoſe Tranſactions, which have paſſed *in theſe very*

Days, and, in ſome Reſpects, under our own Obſervation. From this View we ſhall be enabled to deduce ſuch Inferences *for our Admonition*, as will effectually anſwer the Intentions of the preſent Solemnity.

We have juſt ſeen an entire Diſunion take Place between ourſelves, and our Relations and Fellow-Subjects in another Quarter of the Globe; in Conſequence of a Conteſt, that had it's Origin in Violence, and Miſrepreſentation on both Sides. Threats and Remonſtrances were followed by a long, ruinous, and bloody War. Beſides an immenſe Waſte of Treaſure, many Thouſands of valuable Citizens were cut off by Sickneſs, by the Elements, and by the Sword, in the Bloom of Life; and were hurried to the Grave amidſt every Circumſtance of Miſery, upon unknown Seas and in a ſtrange Land. Theſe Profeſſors of a merciful Religion, theſe Diſciples of *the Prince of Peace*, now lie in Expectation

of

of the Coming of their Lord, in Bodies covered with Wounds, and in *Garments rolled in Blood.* And for what valuable Purpoſe was this Guilt incurred, and theſe Sacrifices made? To accompliſh that Separation, which had been better effected upon other Terms, by the Rules of Equality and Juſtice.

Alas! *the great Ones of the Earth* are not ſufficiently aware of the Moment of their Councils, and of the dreadful Conſequences of War. If it were poſſible for them, amidſt the Eaſe and Indulgence of a Palace, to form an adequate Idea of one ſingle Calamity out of ſo many Thouſands, as befall their Subjects in the Execution of their wild Projects, they would tremble at the Contemplation; and labour as much for the Preſervation, as they ſeem to have laboured, for the Deſtruction of Mankind. We are clearly advertiſed in the Scriptures, that all Government is inſtituted, not for the private Gratification of Kings—

not

not to encreaſe their Splendour and aggrandiſe their Power — but for the Welfare of the People committed to their Charge. Reaſon tells us, and Experience proves, that Countries, remote from the Seat of Government, are ſeldom ruled with Humanity and Juſtice. The Inhabitants are too often plundered and oppreſſed by thoſe, who are commiſſioned to protect them; eager as theſe are in their Extortions, from a Knowledge of the Uncertainty of their Stations and from a Willingneſs to enjoy at Home as ſoon as poſſible the Fruits of their Rapacity. How much wiſer it were to grant that Freedom and Equality with a voluntary Liberality, which, after a Series of Guilt and Murder, muſt in all ſuch Caſes be finally extorted from us! *God made of one Blood all the Nations of the Earth, and determined the Bounds of their Habitation.* He allows all large and diſtinct Societies of Men to avail themſelves of this Diſtribution, by appointing their

their own Rulers and eſtabliſhing their own Laws. It is Madneſs, it is Ruin, to violate the Diſpenſations of *the moſt High.*

It is unneceſſary to dwell any longer upon this Subject; and to enumerate the Events of that calamitous War, in which we have been engaged. The Storm, that threatened to pour down it's Rage upon us, is happily blown over. The ſupreme Governour of the Univerſe has ſpoken to the troubled Ocean with his authoritative Voice: *Peace—Be ſtill.* We are now called upon by the Legiſlature to offer on the Altar of that *Jehovah, who ruleth in the Kingdom of Men—who maketh War and createth Peace*—the Sacrifice of Gratitude for this Sunſhine of Tranquillity; for *comforting us now after the Days of our Affliction, and the Years, in which we have ſeen Adverſity.* Who is not eager to acknowledge that Goodneſs, which hath done this *great Thing* for us? Who feels not a Warmth of Gratitude, proportionate

ate to the Danger, which our *Sion* has eſcaped? The Conflict with ſuch a Hoſt of Foes, at ſuch an enormous Expence of Lives and Treaſure, could hardly fail to terminate in the Ruin of this Country. Our Sun, we ſee, ſuffers an Eclipſe, and has been ſhorn of it's brighteſt Beams: but, Thanks to the Lord of Heaven! it ſtill maintains it's Station in the Hemiſphere, when it might have been *turned into Blood*, and have gone down in everlaſting Night.

Upon this joyful Reverſe of our Affairs, let every Profeſſor of *the Goſpel of Peace*—let every Son of our heavenly Father, who is *the God of Peace*—conſider with himſelf, how he may perform moſt effectually the Offices of a virtuous and patriotic Citizen, as the only Means of preventing in future thoſe Tumults and Animoſities, which are the Scourge of Vice and the Inſtruments of divine Vengeance. We of inferiour Stations and Employments, let our civil Import-

ance

ance be what it will, may eſſentially contribute to the Preſervation of the general Tranquillity. Kings may direct, and Stateſmen may contrive; but, if a Nation corrupt itſelf in the Eyes of *the only Potentate*, the Commands of the Monarch and the Devices of his Miniſters are equally inſignificant. Independant of the Voice of Scripture, the Annals of the World abundantly teſtify, that Irreligion and Licentiouſneſs are uniform Symptoms of approaching Deſolation. In vain is every Implement of War prepared; in vain will *the Hoſt go forth to Battle:* the *Bow is broken*, and *the Spear knapt aſunder*, before a People more righteous than themſelves.

Let every Individual, then, promote, after his Meaſure, the public Welfare, by *walking uprightly* in all Things; by diſcharging with Aſſiduity and Faithfulneſs, every Duty, that he owes to God, his Brother, and himſelf. This will be the beſt Acknowledgement for the Goodneſs

neſs of the Almighty in the Reeſtabliſh-ment of Peace, and in *lifting up* once more *the Light of his Countenance upon us.* This is the direct Mean of ſecuring the Continuance of Peace. For, by the Diffuſion of Integrity and the Fear of God through all the Orders of Society and through every Department of the State, our Governours would learn their Duty to the Subject, our Grievances would be redreſſed, our Affairs retrieved, our Reſources multiplied, and Peace of Courſe eſtabliſhed, as we became thus formidable to other Nations. For in what can a Kingdom confide, but in the Virtue of it's Inhabitants? And where is our Hope, but in the univerſal Amendment of our Lives—in a ſincere national Reformation?

Are we able, however, to diſcern at preſent, or can the moſt candid point out, any Appearances of ſuch a Change? Are the rich and noble, leſs ambitious, leſs ſenſual, leſs prodigal, leſs luxuri-

ous—

ous — are the poor, more orderly, diligent, and ſober — are the middle Ranks of the Community, more diſcreet, more faithful in their Dealings, than before? Or rather, do we not ſtill perceive that total Inattention to religious Duties, that profligate Diſregard of moral Obligation, thoſe Profanations of the Sabbath, that Injuſtice, Intemperance, and Unrulineſs, which has ſo long diſtinguiſhed our Character, and muſt end in the Extinction of our Glory?—It were an Exceſs of Infatuation truly pitiable, not to perceive the critical Situation of this Country. We have been bleſſed, as a Nation, with a more than ordinary Share of Favour. We have enjoyed greater Opportunities of doing Service to Mankind, than any other People whatſoever. We have been enabled to claim for ourſelves a Degree of civil and religious Liberty, which has made us the Envy of the World and the Pride of human Nature. This little Spot of Land has ſent it's Arms into every

Corner

Corner of the Globe, and diſperſed it's Ships through every Ocean under Heaven.* Our Proficiency in Arts and Science has been commenſurate to our military Reputation, and has conſpired to exalt us to the higheſt Pinnacle of Greatneſs.—But have we been as renowned for a liberal Communication of our Religion and our Laws, as for the Poſſeſſion of them? Have we navigated and conquered to ſave, to civilize, and to inſtruct; or to oppreſs, to plunder, and to deſtroy? Let INDIA and AFRICA give the Anſwer to theſe Queſtions. The one we have exhauſted of her Wealth and her Inhabitants, by Violence, by Famine, and every Species of Tyranny and Murder. The Children of the other we daily carry off from the Land of their Nativity, like *Sheep for the Slaughter*, to return no

* The Reader muſt diſcover, that theſe Obſervations are concluſive without recurring to the Lawfulneſs of *offenſive* War. The *Event* is an Advantage in our Hands, and upon this alone the Argument depends.

more;

more: we tear them from every Object of their Affection; or, ſad Alternative! drag them together to the Horrours of a mutual Servitude: we keep them in the profoundeſt Ignorance; we gall them in a tenfold Chain, with an unrelenting Spirit of Barbarity, inconceivable to all but Spectators of it, unexampled amongſt former Ages and other Nations, and unrecorded even in the bloody Regiſters of heathen Perſecution.

Such is the Conduct of us, enlightened Engliſhmen! reformed Chriſtians! Thus have we profited by our ſuperiour Advantages, by the Favours of God, by the Doctrines and Example of *a meek and lowly* Saviour! Will not the Bleſſings, that we have abuſed, loudly teſtify againſt us? Will not the Blood, that we have ſhed, *cry out from the Ground* for Vengeance upon our Sins? *If ye forget the Lord your God*, ſaith the Scripture, *I witneſs againſt you this Day, that ye ſhall ſurely periſh: ye ſhall be conſumed, both ye*

and your King, if ye ſtill do wickedly, and refuſe to obey the Voice of the Lord your God. What indeed can we expect, but that other Nations will be raiſed up to puniſh our Diſobedience, unleſs we make Haſte to repent, to reform our Manners, and reconcile ourſelves to God? Should we reſolve to value his Favour above all Things, to recommend ourſelves in his Sight by Acts of Benevolence and Righteouſneſs, as Individuals and as a Nation; he will again become our Shield, and fight our Battles with the Foes, that riſe up againſt us. He will lift us up from the Pit of Deſtruction, into which we have been gradually ſinking, and reinſtate us in Security and Honour. The withered Branch will feel the returning *Influences of Heaven* deſcend upon it, and again put forth it's Leaves. Though the Lord our God hath humbled us, yet *will he rejoice over us to do us Good at our latter End.* He will collect the ſcattered Ruins of our State, and conſtruct a better and firmer

firmer Edifice: ſo that they, who remember the Glory of the former Fabric, ſhall no longer weep over it's Decay. For Jehovah himſelf will ſay to our Jeruſalem, Thou ſhalt be builded: and to our Temple, Thy Foundations ſhall be laid.

THE END.

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